

Service Charge Implementation 04 September 2014

Equality Impact Assessment

Service Charge Implementation

Contact: Dave O'Brien - Housing Services

Updated: 04.09.14

1. What type of proposal / decision is being assessed?

A strategic or service plan

2. What is the purpose of this proposal / decision, and what change (to staff or the community) will occur as a result of its implementation?

To reach agreement to implement a new strategic policy of charging our Council Tenants Service Charges for the services they receive from April 1st 2015. In line with Welsh Government HRAS self financing review which requires Councils to disaggregate service charges from rents.

3. Does this proposal / decision require an equality impact assessment? If no, please explain why.

*Please note: if the proposal will have an impact on people (staff or the community) then an equality impact assessment **must** be undertaken*

Yes

4. Please provide a summary of the steps taken, and the information used, to carry out this assessment, including any engagement undertaken

(Please refer to section 1 in the toolkit for guidance)

Notice of variation to our tenancy agreement sent to all council tenants week commencing 11 August 2014 along with a draft comparison with current version. Draft tenancy highlights "Rent and Other Charges" and gives examples of chargeable services.

Preferred method is to reduce rent by amount of Service Charge resulting in full depooling (separation).

An article in the latest Tenants newsletter. Face to face explanations and discussions at the drop in sessions during September. Involvement in working groups and briefing sessions with Members and representatives on the HRAS Self Financing Steering Group.

5. Will this proposal / decision have a positive impact on any of the protected characteristics (age; disability; gender-reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation)?
(Please refer to section 1 in the toolkit for a description of the protected characteristics)

No

6. Will this proposal / decision have a disproportionate negative impact on any of the protected characteristics (age; disability; gender-reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation)?

As would be anticipated given the need to maintain communal shared areas, early indications show that the level of Service Charges for apartments and sheltered complexes are higher than in general needs accommodation due to the costs of maintaining communal areas. As over 1200 units are designated for older people, then this may have a disproportionate impact upon these tenants

Also, projected Grounds Maintenance costs in some of the smaller complexes are likely to be higher than larger ones so a Zone/County approach to charging is recommended.

7. Has the proposal / decision been amended to eliminate or reduce any potential disproportionate negative impact? If no, please explain why.

Yes	<p>The implementation of Service Charging and issuing of a new Tenancy Agreement is directed at our customers (Council Tenants) who will already consist of protected groups. As highlighted above, Sheltered Schemes are likely to have higher service charges than general needs accommodation. Analysis has been undertaken which indicates that 65% of all our tenants receive some Housing Benefit, with Shelterd Tenants.</p> <p>In addition, in year one, our recommendation is that through depooling we reduce an individual's rent by the amount of chargeable services they receive. For example, current rent of £70 per week of which we can attribute £5 of service chargeable costs. For 2015 2016 the rent and other charges to the tenant would be shown as:</p> <p style="text-align: right;">£65 Rent £ 5 Service Charges £70 Total Payable</p>
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8. Have you identified any further actions to address and / or monitor any potential negative impact(s)?

Yes	<If yes please complete the table below. If no, please explain here>
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Action(s)	Owner	By when?
Consultation on Preliminary Notice incorporating e-briefings, drop in sessions, facebook and twitter updates, roadshows and newsletters	<Dave O'Brien>	12.10.14
Consider consultation feedback and amend as required	<Dave O'Brien>	10.11.14
Separate newsletter in January to increase awareness.	<Dave O'Brien>	31.01.15
<Please describe>	<Enter Name>	<DD.MM.YY>
<Unrestrict editing to insert additional rows>	<Enter Name>	<DD.MM.YY>

9. Declaration

Every reasonable effort has been made to eliminate or reduce any potential disproportionate impact on people sharing protected characteristics. The actual impact of the proposal / decision will be reviewed at the appropriate stage.

Review Date:	10.11.14
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Name of Lead Officer for Equality Impact Assessment	Date
Dave O'Brien	04/09/14

Please note you will be required to publish the outcome of the equality impact assessment if you identify a substantial likely impact.
